

The primary mission of the Office of the Chief Medical Examiner (OCME) is the investigation of sudden, unexpected or violent death. By statute (RSA 611), there are twenty-five categories of death reportable to the medical examiner for inquiry. This inquiry includes an investigation into the circumstances of death and examination of the body, including performance of an autopsy. Goals and objectives of this process include determination of cause and manner of death as well as proffering, when scientifically defensible, a hypothesis regarding specific aspects of the fatal episode. While aiding law enforcement in the investigation of violent death, approximately 40% of all medical examiner's cases are the result of natural causes; thus the OCME serves a vital public health function in monitoring the overall health of citizens of the State. OCME also serves as a consultant to various entities regarding wound pattern recognition and mechanisms of injury in non-fatally injured persons.

Case Work

More than 12,000 cases required contact with a medical examiner at some level during the biennium. Of these cases, approximately 2099 required in-depth investigations and, of those, many required a detailed scene investigation. Several hundred telephone consultations were also conducted. Autopsy examination was performed in 771 cases.

Specimen Retention and Histology

From autopsied cases during the biennium, over 3,200 additional specimens of blood, tissue, vitreous and other biological samples

were retained. Histological studies were conducted on hundreds of cases and over 2,800 histologic slides were reviewed.

Service to the State

During the biennium, the Office of the Chief Medical Examiner has provided the following services:

- Reviewed medical and police records connected to homicides and other crimes for the Attorney General's Office, County Attorneys and the Division for Children, Youth and Families (DCYF);
- Provided clinical assessment of injuries to victims of interpersonal violence at the request of DCYF, police, County Attorneys and Public Defenders;
- Provided full-time, around the clock coverage by trained assistant deputy medical examiners to all ten counties;
- Participated as a member of the Sudden Unexplained Infant Death Investigation Training & Dissemination Core Team under the auspices of the Center for Disease Control (CDC);
- Provided testimony at depositions and trials as needed;
- Consulted with prosecutors, law enforcement, forensic laboratory personnel, and hospital laboratories, private physicians, and hospital personnel as needed;
- Provided twenty-four hour a day coverage for consultations with county medical examiners and homicide prosecutors;
- Maintained and updated procedures and protocols for disaster management and preparedness, participated in disaster training exercises, both tabletop exercises and an actual drill at Pease Tradeport, and both tabletop exercises and an actual drill at Manchester Airport;
- Provided toxicology reports for all fatal motor vehicle accidents to the Division of Enforcement (Department of Safety);
- Provided data and complete reports on all drug, poison and alcohol related deaths to the New Hampshire Poison Information Center, New Hampshire Alcohol and Drug Abuse Prevention Program, the National Pediatric Toxicology Registry, and the federal Drug Abuse Warning Network;
- Completed U.S. Department of Labor Reports on all work-related fatalities;
- Completed reports for the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission on all deaths involving commercial products and residential buildings (including falls) and continued to participate in the MECAP Project;
- Provided other data and reports on all appropriate cases to the Federal Food and Drug Administration, Drug Enforcement Agency, Office of the Ombudsman, Federal Aviation Administration, National Highway Transportation Safety Administration, National Transportation Safety Board, and Occupational Safety and Health Administration;
- Presented a regular schedule of lectures and otherwise participated in medical resident and student training at Dartmouth Medical School, Department of Pathology;
- Presented a regular schedule of lectures and otherwise participated in physician assistant training at Massachusetts College of Pharmacy & Health Sciences, Manchester;

- Conducted training programs for law enforcement, fire service and other safety responders, pre-hospital (EMT/Paramedic) personnel, medical and nursing staff, attorneys, high school and college level students, victims' assistance volunteers, and medical examiners across the State;
- Participated in multiple state committees, task forces and conference groups including the Child Fatality Review Committee, the Domestic Violence Fatality Review Committee, Youth Suicide Prevention and Awareness Committee, Trauma Review Committee, Teen Motor Vehicle Legislative Task Force, NH Coalition to Prevent Shaken Baby Syndrome, Vital Records Improvement Fund Advisory Committee, Child Abuse and Neglect Committee of the NH Pediatric Society, the Attorney General's Task Force on Child Abuse and Neglect and the NH Injury Data Work Group;
- Participated in multiple state, national and international professional organizations including the National Association of Medical Examiners, American Academy of Forensic Sciences, Association of SIDS and Infant Mortality Programs, National Domestic Violence Advisory Board, American Academy of Pediatrics, and College of American Pathologists;
- Submitted, presented and/or published scientific papers in professional forums and scientific journals;
- Participated in MEDEX (medical examiner surveillance program); and
- Provided training to clinicians and other health care providers on a broad range of issues in forensic medicine.